Pepper Spray 101

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET SPRAYED WITH RIOT CONTROL AGENTS

This is a brief and noncomprehensive introductory guide on how to treat pepper spray / pepper gel / pepper blast balls and other riot control agent injuries when at a protest, with after care for on the ground and at home, and how to prepare and prevent for future encounters with chemical weapons.

WHAT ARE OC CONTAMINENTS?

Riot control agents (RCAs) are less-lethal chemical agents used by law enforcement to incapacitate protesters and disperse crowds. RCAs are often lachrymators (agents that cause tear production in the eyes), some of which cause a strong feeling of burning on the skin and mucous membranes.

RCAs are designed to cause immense pain and discomfort, and may cause panic attacks. Some RCAs may induce vomiting. RCA's include tear gas, pepper spray/gel, mace, and other aerosol ir spray delivered chemical weapons.

Less-lethal devices

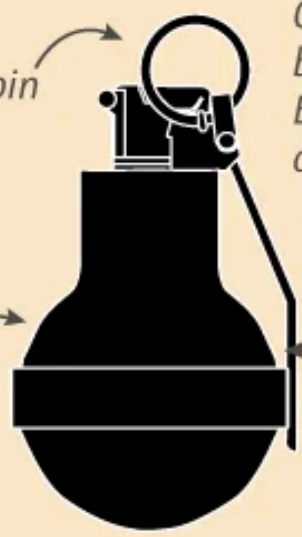
TEAR-GAS GRENADES

Safety pin

ABC-M7A3
Releases a cloud of tear gas for 15 to 35 seconds.

Safety lever

Metal canister



Safety pin

Used by Seattle Police Deprtment

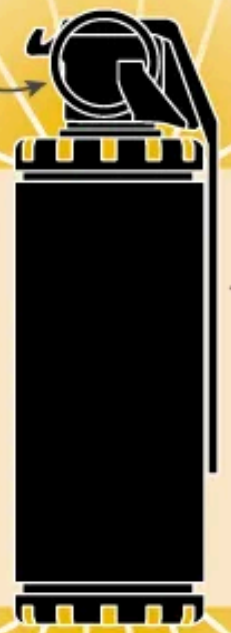
OC tear ball or blast ball
Bursts open, releases a cloud of tear gas.
Blast ball detonates with a loud bang.

Rubber body

Safety lever

FLASH-BANG GRENADES

Model 7290



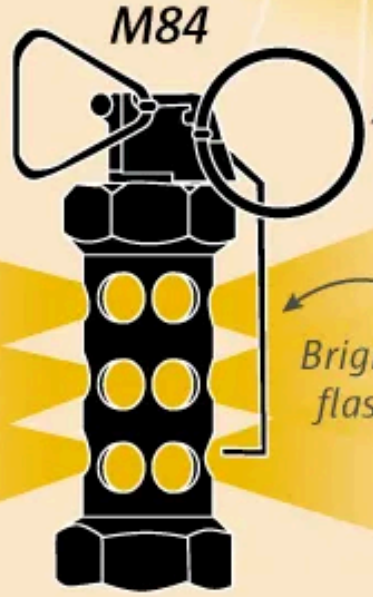
Safety pin

Bright flash

Safety lever

Bright flash

M84



Safety pin

Safety pin

Safety lever

Bright flash

Bright flash

PEPPER SPRAY

Trigger

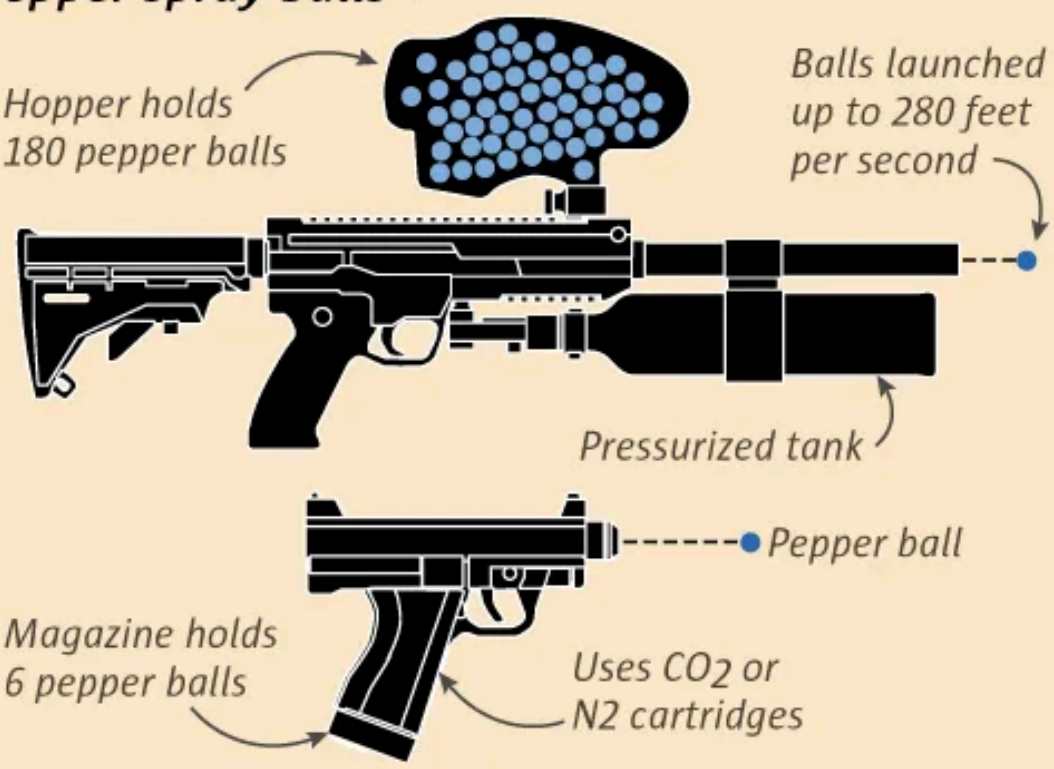
Nozzle

Handle

Used by Seattle Police Deprtment

Hand-held, pressurized canister used at close range to deploy spray.

Air guns with pepper-spray balls



Hopper holds 180 pepper balls

Balls launched up to 280 feet per second

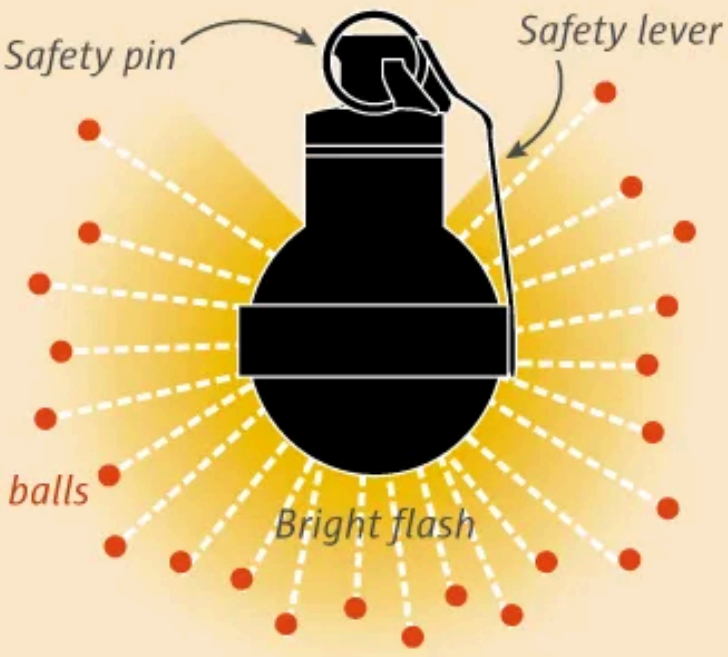
Pressurized tank

Pepper ball

Magazine holds 6 pepper balls

Uses CO_2 or N2 cartridges

Sting ball



Safety pin

Safety lever

Rubber balls

Bright flash

Sources: Federation of American Scientists, bmjopen.bmj.com, Hearing Health Foundation, GlobalSecurity.org, snopes.com, fordlibrarymuseum.gov, un.org, sciencehistory.org, operationalmedicine.org, botach.com, lesslethal.com,combinedsystems.com, atlantictactical.com, lamperdlesslethal.com, defense-technology.com, pepperball.com, aftermath.com, seattle.gov/police-manual

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIME

I GOT SPRAYED OR HIT WITH PERIPHERAL BLASTS, WHAT DO I DO?

- A street medic or protest buddy can help you flush out your eyes with cold bottled water. Rinse one side at a time by turning your head as far to the left/right as you can so it washes away from your face without contaminating the other side.
- You can also use sudecon wipes to remove contaminants from your skin - avoid using directly on your eyes.
- Saline solution can be used to rinse the eyes and nose in addition to water.
- Rinse your mouth and throat with water, spit it out, then hydrate!
- Carefully remove any excess contaminated clothing if possible.
- If you will be getting in a car, put a trash bag over the seat so you don't contaminate the car fabric. Keep the air off and the windows closed.

STEPS TO TAKE AT HOME

- Bag your clothes in a sealed plastic bag until you can wash them on a cold water cycle with high potency laundry detergent. Wash your clothes separately from uncontaminated clothes! Dry on low or no heat. You may need to wash your clothes more than once to get the residue out.
- Take a **COLD** shower - sit on the floor of your shower with the water on cold, head forward between your knees for 10 minutes to let the contaminants run off you. Use a gentle soap after. If you have textured hair, you may need to rinse for longer to get the residue out.
- Hydrate! Avoid caffeine and alcohol - OC is taxing on the liver, so you need to replenish fluids and avoid additional strain

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES FOR THE FUTURE

- Get chemical goggles like the ones pictured here, cover the vents with duct tape, make sure they fit well and that they can cover your glasses if you wear them - don't wear contact lenses!

- Get a respirator with P100 (pink) filters, make sure it fits you properly

- Pack an IFAK for protests with basic things for major bleeds, sudecon wipes, electrolyte packets, etc.
- Bring 2 squeeze bottles of water with you to a protest - 1 to drink and 1 to use for flushing eyes
- Don't go to a protest alone - if you are alone, make a new friend as soon as possible and stick together - we go in together, we come out together! We keep us safe!

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Getting sprayed with OC weapons can be a traumatic experience for anyone. Practice self care and take care of each other.

After going through a traumatic event, play tetris or a similar puzzle game for 5 minutes a day everyday for 30 days. This is scientifically proven to help prevent traumatic events from becoming post-traumatic events.

Trauma tacks on to trauma, so even if you already have PTSD you can still prevent other events from becoming part of it. You also may not know something is traumatic to your body and brain until much later, so do what you can now to take care of yourself for the long haul!

THERE ARE MORE OF US THAN THERE ARE OF THEM!

Don’t let getting sprayed be the thing that stops you from fighting back against repression and fascism.

They think they can intimidate us into compliance. We know better!
When we work together to keep each other safe and prepared, we can fight back for as long as this fight will take us!

Be brave!

FURTHER READING

Riot Medicine
https://riotmedicine.net/

Physicians for Human Rights Protester's Guide
https://tinyurl.com/PHRprotestersguide

VICE on Pepper Spray 2024
vice.com/en/article/pepper-spray/